

Summer School Report, Activities outside the official program:

The KNOTS Summer School 2018 was hosted in the historically rich and vibrant city of Chiang Mai. Every single day of the Summer School and of the Field Trips offered new intercultural experiences, there were always new things to try and new places to see. After the long sessions and discussions during the day, we had leisure time in the evening, something we all waited for. Despite of the pouring rain on some of the nights, most participants spent their free time with friends and other participants and explored local night bazaars or chic cafes and restaurants around the Nimman area, where the hotel for all participating staff and students as well as the University building were located.

In general, Chiang Mai University has successfully organized the Summer School. The accomodation we stayed in was the L-Nimman Boutique Hotel, a small but quite comfortable hotel. Hospitality activities and services for picking up students from the airport, organizing lectures and discussion, contacting and organized the field trips is the most notable success and run all the programs smoothly in overall.

The hotel is located in a district with many restaurants and bars. Students and lecturers alike often went out to have dinner in smaller groups. Some groups met up after dinner to go out to have a drink together. This meant that some of us got very little sleep during the nights but raised our spirits.

Shopping at local night markets also became a nice experience. It was interesting to see how the bargaining process and interactions worked in the markets. From the interaction with the local sellers we got some insights, including the fact that we accidentally found out who the talented person was who made our KNOTS tote bags. She is the kind lady who opened a small stall of ethnic bags and pouches in Kalare Night Bazaar!

After the Field Trips we had a free day before our final presentations. The free day after Field Trips was probably the most awaited item on the schedule for all of participants, as it was the only real break in the two weeks. Coincidentally, this day overlapped with a national holiday in Thailand, which is Buddhist Lent Day or known as Asalha Bucha (Asadha Puja) 2661 BE. This gave some of us a great opportunity to join locals and other tourists in visiting temples in Chiang Mai. Some of us joined the praying and rituals, like walking around the “chedi” temple in a circle, which called as “pradaksina”.

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One of the concerns we found is that on most of the free evenings the participants were hanging out with groups from their home universities. This was also visible during the Summer School sessions, where the same groups of people almost always sat together and organized themselves in groups according to their home universities. Additionally, the rooms in the hotel were organized in a way that two students of the same university shared a room.

Therefore, our suggestion for the next KNOTS Summer School program would be that to have intercultural activities before we split into smaller groups depending on the field trip number. It might be challenge because we were a big group. However, we think it would be beneficial to establish new friendships and to have intercultural experiences among participants and with locals.

This being said, the Summer School and the activities outside the program were a great experience. Thanks to this summer course, we understand more about Thai culture, Thai people and Thai cuisine. In the culture of behavior, the Thai people expressed religious devotion, royal respect and respect hierarchy as well as age. Two weeks in Thailand were a very enjoyable experience.

The welcoming and highly interactive study environment in the Summer School and the Field Trips is the perfect setting for making a lot of new friends by interacting with our classmates and participating in social events. Even shy students told us that they had an easy time opening up, thanks to the friendly atmosphere, the shared interests of the participants and the small study groups and the acceptance of diversity.

Lastly, the combination of participants from multiple nationalities, disciplines, and perspectives made activities interesting since it lead to discussions, sharing and learning new things. Somehow choosing our field research sites also destiny, how we randomly choose the field research sites before we know who will be there, who will be at the same group with us, who we will work it. Therefore, at the end of the day after all the discussion and trips we are having stronger bonds and will be a good friends even after the summer school is over.

More important is that we as foreign participants can make intercultural exchange with local Thai students/ participants from Chiang Mai University (CMU). This intercultural exchange is essential because CMU students help us a lot to show, explain, and even guide us to many

interesting places, foods, or even help us to understand deeper of Chiang Mai (Lanna) local culture.

Since we, the authors of this text, were all part of the Field Trip number 8 “Dams and livelihood in the Mekong River”, we would like to describe the atmosphere and activities outside the program we experienced in Chiang Khong. Here we must mention our wonderful group leaders Ms. Siya Uthai and Professor Ekamol Saichan. They did a very good job in term of connecting, communicating, scheduling with all the stakeholders we met, organizing meals, transportation, and general logistics for our group. They always offered us new experiences even in our free time by taking us to different places for lunch and dinner. Once we went to a fancy breakfast at the Ibis Style Hotel Chiang Kong. This actually had the purpose to enable us to observe the uneven development and inequality in Chiang Khong as we could see the contrast between the luxury hotel and the housing surround.

As the finale, we had a great evening at the riverside restaurant and some of us met up with group number 7. Moreover, the chats over drinks that we had every night were also important moments. After our dinner chats or short walk to closest 7-11 serves as moment for us as group member to get closer, sharing stories, and we find we have a lot to share not just related to the trips, topic, or TDR. Even on trips back to Chiang Mai, lunch stop at (unique) "Cabbages and Condoms" restaurant, a non-profit restaurant, also serve a purpose of learning experiences and we definitely have learned a lot about the new places and also our personal and group roles that we can contribute in this context. At the end, we must say we have many unforgettable pleasant memories, that even make us smile when we remember it.